



Amalgamated Transit Union

Local #1576 Newsletter

March 2009

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Website:
www.atu1576.org

President's Report by Kathleen Custer, President/B.A.

One Contract Down!!!

Now don't get too excited— those of you from CT.... I'm talking about the Senior Services contract! (Hey, if you can't laugh about it...)

Throughout so many months of negotiations and after the hard work and dedication of our negotiating teams we finally reached a tentative agreement which we endorsed for ratification. And what an overwhelming vote it was; 40-YES, 4-NO!

We opened negotiations with Senior Services late last summer and were faced with proposals from management that were numerous and what began as unbelievably harmful to our membership. We met almost weekly (!) and what went from detrimental to our members, ended up becoming attendance, discipline and audio/video polices that were negotiated to be, in most regards, improved. We worked tirelessly to protect our memberships rights and believe we accomplished what we set out to do.

Additionally, we were successful in receiving a 9% retro-active wage increase over the term (3%:2008, 3%:2009, 3%:2010) with a 1% *NET* signing bonus of \$350 (approx. \$450-\$460 before taxes). Also included in our successes is an increase in the employer contribution to medical premiums, \$0.10 cent longevity pay increase for all longevity steps, an increase in the shoe allowance, paid administrative leave pending an investigation and much more.

I think most importantly, we were able to maintain status quo— no take aways- with respect to vacation and sick leave. Given the tough economic times we're faced with, it's clear our membership agrees we did the very best we could. Do we deserve more? Absolutely! You will always deserve more! In less than three years we'll be back to the table again— fighting for a little more and more.

Very special thanks goes to our executive board officers Randy Ekstrand and Pat Fitzgerald for such perseverance and commitment to our membership. And to... (dare I say) management for their hard work in reaching an agreement. It takes both sides!- Something Community Transit has yet to realize... And if and when they ever do— we'll be ready to reach an agreement with them, just as we can obviously do with our other properties!!

Negotiations Start at First Transit— Tacoma

It's never a dull moment! Just when you can breath about settling one contract, we're entering into negotiations with another. All of this in addition to the regular work load of the everyday Union crusade.

We opened negotiations last week with First Transit in Tacoma and presented our proposal to the company based on information we received from member survey's distributed last month. Thank you for those of you who responded. Since we are so early in the bargaining process, having only met at the twice, it is far too early to report on much. We meet again in early April and hope to continue to make progress. Your negotiating team appreciates your patience and encouragement during this time.

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Vice President's Report by Rick Jurkovic, Vice President

ATU 1576 and Senior Services of Snohomish County recently entered into a Tentative Agreement for a new contract. We appreciate the hard work of EBoard Officers **Pat Fitzgerald** and **Randy Ekstrand** who worked with President Custer to negotiate this contract. Next, President Kathleen Custer and I will be headed down to First Transit in Tacoma to hammer out a new contract with EBoard Officers **Laura Sandoval** and **Roy Ott**. This contract is the 4th contract that has come due in just over a year, and the first one I'll be involved with from the onset.

Of course, over half of our membership is eager to know what is going on with the Community Transit contract which is now into its 15th month. Doesn't it seem strange that we can have success everywhere but at Community Transit?

Unfortunately, there is nothing new here. Since I started working at Community Transit in 2001, I have spent more time working without a contract than I have worked with one. What I have been thankful for is that the membership sees right through the issues and realizes the fault does not lie within our negotiating team. I have had literally hundreds of conversations with members regarding the contract and the great work we are doing and I have never been treated so respectfully in my life. The blame by our members for the lack of a contract is rightly placed on the shoulders of the CEO and Management's negotiating team. This is normal for them.

As I look around in the meetings I attend with Management on our properties the thought that often occurs to me is, "most of these people have never driven a bus!" Then I think about King County Metro where all Supervisors, Dispatchers and Trainers must come from the ranks of Drivers with something like 5 years

Financial Secretary/Treasurer's Report by Patty Ceis

As usual, our Arbitration account must be brought up to its minimum balance as of the end of 2008. The good news is, because of our By-laws amendment last year, the assessment will be only a one time deduction of \$10.15. I will request that your employers deduct this amount in March in the second pay periods for those of you who have bi-weekly pay dates.

For those of you at **First Transit, Everett**, only: since the payroll deductions at your property have been so chaotic this year due to the transitions your employers' department has been going through, I regret to have to tell you that it's just come to my attention that some of you still have \$15.25 outstanding for the '07 assessment. In those cases, I have requested that FT stop all other deductions in that pay period for March only and take the total of \$25.40 (\$15.25 + \$10.15). If you have any questions, please feel free to let me know.

Patty Ceis

Financial Secretary/Treasurer



Wouldn't it be something if Managers came up from the ranks beginning with driving? Having said this, I just want to clarify, we have some very good Trainers and Dispatchers who came from the outside who are doing a great job, but as a matter of policy I would like to see promotion from within.

We need to understand the position of our members who happen to be Trainers and Dispatchers. Dispatchers are in a position to give us instructions which we are obligated to follow and Trainers are in the position to give us ride checks and further training if necessary. There has been some misunderstanding by some of the membership in regards to getting further training. When someone is called in for additional training it is not intended as a discipline, although I can certainly understand why someone would feel that way.

Unions have the right to negotiate mandatory subjects of bargaining which are working conditions. Working conditions include, but are not limited to, wages, benefits and discipline. One of the many reasons the CT contract is being held up because management refuses to allow us to bargain issues such as discipline. They re-invent the SOP with disciplines and ignore our demand to bargain. I am humbled by your patience as these issues are mitigated. Thank all of you from all of our properties for your support.

In Solidarity, Rick M. Jurkovic, Vice President.



President's Report (cont.)

Community Transit Negotiations

For those members at Community Transit who are patiently and curiously waiting for a status report regarding contract talks, please look for a more detailed and descriptive letter in your mailbox that I intend on distributing within the next two weeks.

CT Bidding Results Are IN...

You asked and you shall receive... the results of the recent bidding survey I circulated asking you what **you** wanted to do with regard to the Coach Operator bid in conjunction with the upcoming implementation of the Swift BRT service that is slated to start November 29th. I distributed approximately 350 surveys, one for every CT Coach operator and 174 surveys were returned (not bad!). The two options were to either have an extended shakeup; June through November or to have a "double bid; bidding in August for two future shakeups.

And the winner is...Option 2: *Coach Operators will bid for their work (as usual) on August 22nd & 23rd, but Operators will be "double" bidding at that time for two separate shakeups; The first shakeup would start September 20th and the work available to bid would remain the same as your June work. The second shakeup you would bid for in August would start on November 29th, when BRT starts (thus creating a 'mini' two month shakeup). This would be the 'paper shakeup' with your work changing, as well as the BRT work available to bid at that time.*

Option 1 – Extended Shakeup received only 56 votes while Option 2 received 118 votes. Although the vote was far from close, remember, majority rules! Thanks to everyone for submitting their vote and providing your feedback. Your guidance is much appreciated!

Commentary by John Sainz

Recording Secretary

Recently, we have had another Operator who was badly assaulted. Our employee security doesn't cut it. **Please don't misunderstand me, I thank God every day for our Transit Police, but there simply are not enough of them and they're not around when we need them.** The immediate response to the request for more Officers is "we don't have the money for more". Rubbish. If the State Legislatures would eliminate the multitude of duplicative agencies and commissions, there could well be enough money to double the number of Transit Officers statewide. As for CT specifically, we wasted plenty of money on the logo change and all that came with it: new uniforms, new letterhead, new graphics on the coaches, etc. That estimated several hundred thousand dollars would have covered at least a year's salary for more Transit Police. The bonuses paid to top Management should have been spent for transit security. Their upper five and six-figure salaries should be plenty to live on, especially when they're screaming poverty at the bargaining table. This is another issue I'm keeping a close eye on. In the meantime, do everything you can to stay safe. If you feel threatened, use that SAT button, that's what it's there for.

I have pulled the Caller ID notices down. The expressed reason for having all of our numbers, cell and home phones both, is that Dispatch uses them in a program that allows them to click on your name in the computer and it dials the phone should they need to call you. However, remember Caller ID and use your best judgment when calling in.

At the last CT Labor/Management meeting the subject of disappearing names in the Daybook came up. These would be Operators who had leave approved and then had it disappear after they'd checked and came back from vacation to find they had a No-Show. One Operator had the foresight to take a picture of the Daybook with his name and approved leave with his camera phone. Therefore, although we've not received anymore complaints regarding the issue, we suggest you either take a picture or print a copy of the Daybook page with your information. I've had a few operators ask if the company has stopped bumping to add Union Business to the Daybook. They have not, so Vice President Rick Jurkovic and I have tried to be careful not to bump anybody, even if we have to reschedule a meeting.

In Solidarity,
John



Use It or Lose It! by Pat Fitzgerald

Executive Board Officer, Senior Services

Distressing news came my way the other day. It seems some of our Union brothers and sisters forfeited earned vacation time at the end of the past calendar year. Most companies have standing policy regarding unused vacation time, usually no more than a year's vacation may be stockpiled. If it's not used, it simply "goes away"! This was the case for more than a score of employees. A privilege earned was squandered!

Why is this news distressing? The most potent answer is that the privilege of paid vacation was "earned in blood". Hundreds, if not thousands of union activists gave their lives to obtain the 40-hour work week, paid vacation, health care, pension plans and a myriad of other rights and privileges. Failing to fully utilize these rights is a slap in the face of those brave labor pioneers. Not only that, unused privileges give employers the notion that such benefits are excessive and unneeded. We don't want to go down that slippery slope.

So where does that leave a worker who, for whatever reasons, is unable to use all accrued vacation time? Number one option is to sell it back to the company. Many employers, especially those with chronic labor shortages, have a buy-back policy. Turn in that unused vacation for cash! Another option is to donate unused to vacation to needy co-workers. At almost anytime there is at least one co-worker who is on maternity leave, unpaid FMLA or medical leave who can sorely use the donations. The best option is to TAKE YOUR TIME OFF! No one employee is indispensable! All employees need time with their families, for their hobbies, or just to breathe fresh air and smell the flowers. Study after study has shown that good mental health is strengthened by regular breaks from the work-a-day world! If you can't afford to travel at least take an "AL Bundy vacation". Whatever the option, don't let such valuable time go to waste.

While the main thrust of this article is vacation time, "Use It or lose It" applies equally to other benefits. If you are sick, take sick leave. Why report to work with an infectious disease and hazard the entire work-force? See the doctor as needed, get those checkups as required. Fix your teeth. Go see the optometrist! If the co-pays, or deductibles are excessive bring that information to the bargaining table. We are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights; but we have collectively earned our privileges. Don't let them go to waste. Use them!



Respect by Bruce Kurjiaka

Executive Board Officer, Community Transit

Treat others as you would like to be treated. Simple words to live by and something we all need to remember as we go about our day. We have stressful jobs and problems will come up, how we choose to solve them makes all the difference in our lives. We need to remember this when we find ourselves in a difficult situation with a coworker. Name calling and yelling only serve to escalate the conflict, not resolve it.

Handling our issues within the membership and not "down the hall" is a responsibility we have to each other. We need to work diligently and professionally to maintain a strong union especially in these uncertain times.

Respectfully,
Bruce



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WEINGARTEN RIGHTS

“If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my Union Representative, Officer, or Steward be present at this meeting. Without representation present, I choose not to participate in this discussion.”

Upcoming Charter Meetings

**Sunday April 19, 2009 @ 1:00 P.M.
(2810 Lombard, Everett)**

**Sunday April 19, 2009 @ 5:30 P.M.
(IBEW Hall, 3049 S. 36th, Tacoma)**

**Tuesday April 21, 2009 @ 10:00 A.M.
(2810 Lombard, Everett)**

For PERS 2 members: According to the DRS website – “A new law effective in 2008* establishes additional early retirement options. If you have at least 30 years of service credit, you have the option to retire at age 62 or after with an unreduced benefit, or to retire at age 55 or after with a smaller benefit reduc-

The use of Blue Tooths, earphones, cell phones etc. while driving is running rampant again and Management has noticed. Please remember, the use of such devices while driving is prohibited by State of Washington law and by CT policy. Also, we’ve been asked to remind Operators to call in incidents, off-routes and accidents immediately. Failure to do so can lead to discipline.

Lastly, there is a rash of people taking a coach they prefer, rather than the one they’ve been assigned. Please remember, you aren’t just “making your day better, you are also inconveniencing a fellow driver and causing him or her to be late in departing the yard.

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Local #1576**

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